

REMINISCENCES OF LINCOLN' BY MEN WHO KNEW HIM

Many Anecdotes of Civil War President in Volume Now Out of Print

IF Abraham Lincoln were to return to earth and read all that has been written about him he would feel like a man walking through a roomful of mirrors set at different angles. Some of the views would make him smile. Would he know himself in these mirrors?

One thing would certainly please him—the number and variety of the witnesses. As a lawyer he believed in first hand testimony, and he would respect many high sounding tributes in favor of the report of talk and observation made by those who knew him.

"Reminiscences of Abraham Lincoln by Distinguished Men of His Time," a volume now out of print, was planned by Allen Thorndike Rice as a series of contributions to the *North American Review*, which he edited. There were more than thirty authors—Governors, Senators, a Judge, a poet, a painter, a preacher and newspaper men. The first chapter is by U. S. Grant, whose centenary was celebrated this year.

Lincoln's Story That Convinced Lieut.-Gen. Grant

After Grant had been made Lieutenant-General, Lincoln told him a story of war among the animals. One side was led by a monkey who declared that he could win if his followers would give him a longer tail. So they spliced on a piece.

Still he called for more tail, and there being no other place to coil it, they began wrapping it around his shoulders. He continued this call for more, and they kept winding the additional tail about him until his weight broke him down.

"I saw the point," added Gen. Grant, "and rising from my chair, replied: 'Mr. President, I will not call for more assistance unless I find it impossible to do with what I already have.'"

Gen. Grant tells of taking the President to see the ill-fated Dutch Gap Canal at City Point. He explained how the work had been delayed. Among other troubles was the filling up of a portion already excavated by the blasting of another section.

"Grant," said Lincoln, "do you know what this reminds me of? Out in Springfield, Ill., there was a blacksmith named —. One day when he did not have much to do he took a piece of soft iron that had been in his shop for some time and for which he had no special use, and started up his fire to heat it. When he saw it hot he carried it to the anvil and began to hammer it, rather thinking he would weld it into an agricultural implement. He pounded away for some time until he got it fashioned into some shape when he discovered that the iron would not hold out to complete the implement he had in mind. He then put it back into the forge, heated it up again, and commenced hammering, with an ill defined notion that he would make a claw hammer, but there was more iron than was needed. Again he heated it and thought he would make an ax. After hammering and welding it into shape, knocking the oxidized iron off in flakes, he concluded there was not enough iron left to make an ax.

"He was getting tired and disgusted at the result of his various essays, so he filed his forge full of coal and

Lincoln on Biographies.

"I've wondered why book publishers and merchants don't have blank biographies on their shelves, always ready for an emergency; so that if a man happens to die his heirs or his friends, if they wish to perpetuate his memory, can purchase one already written, but with blanks. These blanks they can at their pleasure fill up with easy sentences full of high sounding praise. In most instances they commemorate a lie and chest-posterity out of the truth."

after placing the iron in the center of the heap took the bellows and worked up a tremendous blast, bringing the iron to a white heat. With his tongue he lifted it from the bed of coals, and thrusting it into a tub of water near by, exclaimed, 'Well, if I can't make anything else of you I will make a fizzle anyhow!'

And the modest General admitted the application of the story to Dutch Gap Canal. It certainly was not that unlucky piece of engineering that won the war.

The Poet Whitman Tells Of

His Acquaintance With Lincoln

Walt Whitman found in Lincoln a great theme for his poetry. His contribution to the book compiled by Mr. Rice is brief. It has been questioned whether or not Whitman ever talked with Lincoln. Yet he says here: "I saw his fortune through 1862 to 1865 to see, or hear a word with or watch him personally perhaps twenty or thirty times. And as I dwell on what I myself heard or saw of the mighty Westerner, and blend it with the history and literature of my age, and of what I can get of all ages, and conclude it with his death, it seems like some tragic play, superior to all else I know—vaster and fiercer and more convulsive, for this America of ours, than Eschylus or Shakespeare ever drew for Athens or for England."

And the poet adds this quotation from his war notebook, under date of August 12, 1864:

"I see the President almost every day, as I happen to live where he passes to or from his lodgings out of town. He never sleeps at the White House during the hot season, but has quarters at a healthy location some three miles north of the city—the Soldiers' Home. I saw him this morning about 8:30 coming in to business riding on Vermont avenue near L street. He always has a company of twenty-five or thirty cavalry, with sabers drawn and held upright over their shoulders. The party makes no great show in uniform or horses. Mr. Lincoln, on the saddle, generally rides a good sized, easy going gray horse, is dressed in plain black, somewhat rusty and dusty; wears a black stiff hat and looks about as ordinary in attire as the commonest man. A lieutenant with yellow stripes rides at his left, and following behind, two by two, come the cavalrymen in their yellow and buff uniforms. They are generally going at a slow trot, as that is the pace set them by the One they wait upon. The sabers and accoutre-

ments clank, and the entirely unromantic covered as it trots toward Lafayette Square arouses no sensation, only some curious stranger stops and gazes. I see very plainly Abraham Lincoln's dark brown face, with the deep cut lines, the eyes, always, to me, with a latent sadness in the expression. We have got so that we always exchange bows, and very cordial ones. None of the artists or pictures have caught the subtle and indirect expression of this man's face."

Colfax Could Repeat Many Stories Told by Lincoln

Schuyler Colfax, Speaker of the House and later Vice-President, had many interviews with Lincoln and is authority for not a few of the best known stories and sayings.

Colfax repeats the story Thaddeus Stevens used to tell of one of his constituents, an old woman whom he took to the President to ask for her son's life. The pardon was granted, and as they left the White House the happy mother cried, 'I knew it was a lie! The neighbors told me that Mr. Lincoln was an ugly man, when he is really the handsomest man I ever saw in my life.'

"One morning," writes Colfax, "calling upon him at an early hour on business, I found him so pale and careworn that I inquired the cause. He replied, telling me of bad news received at a late hour of the night and not yet printed, adding that he had not closed his eyes nor breakfasted; and then he said, with an anguished expression which I shall never forget: 'How willingly would I exchange places to-day with the soldier who sleeps on the ground in the Army of the Potomac!'

"The morning after the bloody Battle of the Wilderness I saw him walk up and down the executive chamber, his long arms behind his back, his dark features contracted still more with gloom. . . . But he quickly recovered. Grant will not fail us now. He says he will fight it out on that line and this is not the hope of the country."

Charles A. Dana, as Assistant Secretary of War, has been called "the eyes of the Government at the front." For among other things he performed the inestimable service of gathering for the President and Secretary Stanton information that could be secured in no other way. He used in the nation's service those faculties which later made *THE SUN* a great newspaper.

In 1864 Dana was sent to report on Grant's activities, and he tells in this book of talks with Lincoln that showed the President's consideration for his safety. But one of the best pages is that which pictures the President on the day of a State election, waiting for news in Stanton's office. Writes Mr. Dana:

"Gen. Eckert, who then had charge of the telegraph department of the



Statue of President Lincoln, by Sculptor Daniel Chester French, as placed in the Lincoln Memorial Building, to be dedicated this week.

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"Gen. Eckert, who then had charge of the telegraph department of the

War Office, was coming in continually with telegrams containing election returns. Mr. Stanton would look at them and comment upon them. Presently there came a lull in the returns and Mr. Lincoln called me.

"Dana," said he, 'have you ever read any of the writings of Petroleum V. Nasby? No, sir, I said, 'I have only looked at some of them.'

"Well," said he, 'let me read you a specimen.' And pulling out a thin yellow covered pamphlet from his breast pocket, he began to read aloud. Mr. Stanton viewed this proceeding with great impatience, as I could see, but Mr. Lincoln paid no attention to that. He would read a page or a story, pause to scan a new election telegram, and then open the book again and go ahead with a new passage. Mr. Stanton went to the door and beckoned me into the next room. I shall never forget the fire of his indignation at what seemed to him to be mere nonsense. Yet Mr. Dana has reported elsewhere the comment of the same Stanton on the Gettysburg address, that it would be remembered as long as anybody's speeches are remembered who speaks in the English language."

Thrilling Description of

Entrance Into Captured Richmond

D. R. Locke, the "Petroleum V. Nasby" referred to by Dana, has a chapter. He tells how Lincoln had invited him to Washington to take any job "that you are fit to fill." He admired the President's cautious last clause, and he asked for no office. Later he secured the pardon of a soldier who had deserted to stop his sweetheart from marrying a rival. "I suppose when I was a young man I should have done the same fool thing," remarked the President. It was to Locke that he said, after a cancelled officer's death, "If Gen. — had known how big a funeral he would have he would have died years ago!"

No stranger entrance into a conquered capital is recorded in history than President Lincoln's visit to Richmond, on April 4, ten days before his own death. Charles Carleton Coffin, the newspaper correspondent, has written more than one account of it. This is part of what he prepared for Editor Rice:

"I was standing on the bank of the James river, saw a boat pulled by twelve sailors coming up the river, and a moment later recognized the tall form of the President, with Ad-

miral Porter by his side, Captain Adams of the navy, Lieut. Clemens of the Signal Corps and the President's son Dan.

"Near at hand was a Lieutenant directing the construction of a bridge across the canal. The men under his charge were negroes. 'Would you like to see the man who made you free?' I said. 'Yes, massa.' 'There he is, that man with the tall hat.' 'Is that Massa Linkin'?"

"That is President Linkin'." "Hallelujah! Hurrar, boys, Massa Linkin's come!" He swung his old straw hat, slapped his hands and jumped into the air. In an instant the fifty negroes were shouting it. They ran toward the landing, yelling and shouting like lunatics. I could hear the cry running up the streets and avenues, and a cavalryman rode to Gen. Shepley, who was in command of the city, for an escort.

"An old negro, wearing a few rags, whose white, crisp hair appeared through his crownless straw hat, lifted the hat from his head, knelt upon the ground, clasped his hands and said: 'May de Good Lord bless and keep you safe, Massa President Linkin'.' Mr. Lincoln lifted his own hat and bowed to the old man. His moisture gathered in his eyes. He brushed the tears away, and the procession moved up to the hill, half a dozen cavalrymen with Gen. Shepley opening the way. The procession reached Wirtzel's

vacuous, but sincerely religious and unusually gentle and tender hearted. Together the lovers studied grammar and spelling during the long winter evenings. The little grammar, a gift from Lincoln to Ann, was preserved and is in one of the historical museums of the country. Inscribed on the fly leaf in his handwriting are the words "Ann Rutledge is learning grammar."

The wedding of Ann Rutledge and Lincoln was but three weeks off when Ann died. In a rational moment she sent for her lover to tell him her hour was near. The pair had one anguished hour together, in the living room of the pioneer cabin. Ann's stricken family left them alone. What was said between them no one ever knew. When Ann sank back into unconsciousness Lincoln stumbled out of the house, blind and groping. The Saunders family moved to California in 1881. Recently Aunt Sallie sent to the Old Salem Lincoln League some mementos she had preserved of the martyred President.

Her sister remembers her as vividly going through the country burning houses and killing people. The result was that a considerable force went after them.

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Grant, Dana, Whitman, Douglass and Others Pen Pictures of Martyr

Two Famous Stories

"I SEEM like a man," Lincoln once said when as President he was much annoyed by job hunters, "so busy letting rooms at one end of his house that he has no time left to put out the fire at the other end." And when he fell ill of a light attack of smallpox the President said: "Tell all the office seekers to come here at once, for now I have something I can give them all!"

A number of Congressmen happened to hear on the way to the White House of a raid in which a Brigadier-General and a dozen army mules had been captured. When they told Lincoln the news he said he could fill the General's place "easy enough. But those mules," he added sorrowfully, "cost us \$200 apiece."

Ben Butler tells a rather odd story of his plan for negro soldiers to dig the Panama Canal half a century ago. During the last days of his life the President consulted Butler as to the possibility of sending the freedmen to Liberia or South America to avoid future trouble. Butler convinced him that there were not ships enough to transport the negroes. But the General made this suggestion:

"I know of a concession of the United States to Colombia for a tract of thirty miles wide across the Isthmus of Panama for opening a ship canal. The enlistments of the negroes have all of them from two to three years to run. Why not send them all down there to dig the canal?"

Lincoln showed ready interest in the plan. "Go and talk to Seward," he said. Butler went. But soon after that Seward was thrown from his carriage and Lincoln's assassination followed.

Lincoln's forbearance and his firmness are equally revealed in this volume. He seemed to have no pride of authority or of opinion. He often yielded to Stanton in decisions about the conduct of the war. But when the President was sure he was right the stubborn Secretary had to yield. James B. Fry tells of one occasion when Stanton said:

"Mr. President, those are the facts, and you must see that your order cannot be executed." "Mr. Secretary," replied Lincoln, "I reckon you'll have to execute the order."

"Mr. President, I cannot do it. The order is an improper one and I cannot execute it." "Secretary, it will have to be done."

And done it was. But he never encouraged a contest when it could be avoided. A. H. Markland came to him with a case in which Gen. Grant was trying to get an order from Stanton for army postal facilities. Stanton was quarreling with Postmaster-General Blair and refused to help. Said the President:

"If you and Gen. Grant understand one another suppose you try to get along without the orders, and if Blair or Stanton makes a fuss I may be called in as a referee and I may decide in your favor."

There was no trouble after that.

BRIG.-GEN. H. G. GIBSON, U. S. A., RETIRED, OLDEST LIVING WEST POINTER

By DONALD MacGREGOR.

New York Herald Bureau, Washington, D. C., May 27.

BRIG.-GEN. HORATIO G. GIBSON, U. S. A., retired, who is just turning 95, sat puffing at a heavy cigar to-day as he recounted his adventures in the Mexican war of 1847, the gay time he had in California during the gold rush of '49, his part as an officer in the civil war and his memories of the leading figures of those old days, including Abraham Lincoln.

Gen. Gibson was born on May 22, 1827, but he shows few marks of age. He recalls facts and figures without the slightest hesitation. He hears as well as he ever did and his sight is good enough to permit the reading of books and newspapers without the aid of glasses. He smokes an occasional cigar a day, just as he has every day for the last seventy-five years, and—well, prohibition, while annoying, is not interfering too much with his desire to take an occasional drink.

Gen. Gibson is the oldest living graduate of the United States Military Academy, having been commissioned in the army just in time to get into

the Mexican war. He became a second lieutenant of artillery at a time when they shot nothing but solid cannon balls, on July 1, 1847. The second oldest graduate of the Military Academy is Gen. Abbott, who is the surviving member of the class of 1854.

"I served in Mexico for a year under Gen. Scott," Gen. Gibson explained. "First I went to Pueblo and then on to Mexico city. There wasn't much fighting around there at that time, and we were in army of occupation. I was in the city of Mexico in 1848, in the city, when they hoisted the Mexican flag. That was the end of the Mexican war, and the army, having never numbered more than 100,000, went on back across the border."

"Gen. Robert E. Lee I first saw in Mexico city. He was at the time chief engineer of Scott's army. I never in my life saw a finer looking man than Gen. Lee."

Gen. Gibson knew many officers of the Confederacy. He met them as a student at West Point, having gone there in 1843 as a cadet appointed from York, Pa. Some of the members of his class of 1847 went first in the Confederate army, the list including Gen.

Hill, Heath and Blake. Most of these officers served also in the Mexican war.

"Of course I didn't see a great deal of the fighting in Mexico," Gen. Gibson continued. "I got there late, and besides I was only a second lieutenant. I served as a Lieutenant until the outbreak of the civil war, meantime serving in California."

"When the Mexican war ended and the troops came out I applied for a transfer to the Western Coast. The discovery of gold there was one of the attractions, and I started toward California in 1848, arriving in 1849—so you see I am one of the Forty-niners."

"California was a wild country in those days. San Francisco, of course, was the chief town, and it consisted only of a few adobe houses. I was there when the first frame houses were built. Los Angeles also was much the same kind of a town."

"Both San Francisco and Los Angeles were very wild," said Gen. Gibson. "The Spaniards and Mexicans had been there, along the old Mission route, and had done much good in teaching Christianity to the Indians. But with the rush of miners and boom conditions these peaceful little places were turned into towns of the kind you read about in stories of frontier life. And there was gambling all the time. A miner would work for weeks gathering together a sack of gold and then come to town and put it on the ace and tray in faro."

Got \$20 Worth of Gold

Out of the Earth Himself

"I mined some gold myself in California. I was out one day with a detachment making treaties with the Indians when I came across a miner panning gold down in a gully. I asked him to lend me his cradle for a little while, which he did. I got \$20 worth of gold out myself and when I got back to San Francisco I sent it back to Baltimore to my mother. She took it to the mint and had it made into coin."

"By the time I got to California the Indians were taking on some of the conditions of civilization. Most of them wore clothes, but now and then in the backwoods you would find some of them wearing blankets. All of them had rifles and pistols, and they could shoot. One of them shot me, so I know, but that is another story."

"During the fourteen years I was in the West before the civil war I traveled up and down the coast, into the Oregon country, and back again. There were no trains, of course, and we had

to go on horseback. Some of the trails were too much for the horses, however, and now and then we had to walk."

"In the Rogue River Indian campaign in Oregon I was wounded. I learned, while out with a detachment on my way to Camp Lane, that the Rogue Indians were hostile. They had

been going through the country burning houses and killing people. The result was that a considerable force went after them."

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